

NCBD News...

Updates from the CAHPS® Database

NCBD Sponsor Update

Training Webcasts for Health Plan Data Submissions

As many of you know, NCBD is launching a web-based submission process in 2005. To ensure a smooth transition, we have scheduled two Webcasts to train sponsors and vendors on the new process. The Webcasts (repeat sessions) will be held:

- Tuesday, April 5, 1:30 – 3:00 ET
- Thursday, April 7, 1:30 – 3:00 ET

During the Webcasts, we will describe and demonstrate the data submission process. We will also allow time for questions and discussion. To register, visit the NCBD site at <http://ncbd.cahps.org/Home/AprilWebcast.asp>.

Timeline for 2005 Releases

Sponsors should note that the data submission period for 2005 will open in April immediately following the training for all populations. Sponsors and their designated vendors may submit their information anytime between April and July but all required information, including data files, must be received and approved no later than **July 1, 2005**. Health Plan Sponsor Reports will be distributed as follows:

Population	Release Date
Commercial	September 15
Medicaid	October 15
SCHIP	November 15

Any questions about data submission should be directed to NCBD1@westat.com. We look forward to your participation in 2005!

CAHPS User Group Meeting

The 9th National CAHPS User Group Meeting was held in December in Baltimore and attracted more than 260 attendees. Sessions focused on the expansion of CAHPS surveys from health plans to clinicians, hospitals, dialysis centers and nursing homes. Specific topics included the following:

- An Introduction to Ambulatory CAHPS
- Implementing the New Ambulatory Care Surveys
- Update on the CAHPS Hospital Survey
- Using Survey Data to Improve Quality
- Effective Public Reporting
- Quality Monitoring and Pay For Performance

All of the presentation materials for these and other sessions are available on the CAHPS Survey Users Network Web site at <http://www.cahps-sun.org/Events/archive/ugm9.asp>.

CAHPS Webcast on Medical Group Quality Improvement

The CAHPS Survey Users Network will be holding a free Webcast on *Improving Patient Care: How Medical Practices Are Using New CAHPS® Surveys for Ambulatory Settings* on Wednesday, April 6, 2005 from 1:30 - 3:00 pm ET. Speakers will highlight how they have successfully used preliminary CAHPS surveys for clinicians and groups to improve their patients' experiences, how they overcame common obstacles, and what they have learned from this effort. Visit the CAHPS Survey Users Network site at <http://www.cahps-sun.org/Events/Webcast 2005-04-06.asp> to register for the event.

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2004 National Healthcare Quality Report

ARHQ announced the release of the second annual National Healthcare Quality Report and the National Healthcare Disparities Report on February 22. The reports measure quality and disparities in four key areas of health care: effectiveness, patient safety, timeliness, and patient centeredness. The Quality Report identifies three key themes important to policymakers, clinicians, health system administrators, community leaders and others who work in health care services. The report finds that:

- Quality is improving in many areas, but change takes time.
- The gap between the best possible care and actual care remains large. Quality of care remains highly variable across the country.
- Further improvement in health care is possible. Best practices have been identified, and collaborative, focused efforts among key stakeholders have produced impressive and inspiring gains.

For the second year, NCBD provided state level results for the Medicaid and Medicare managed care and free-for-service populations. Both reports are available on AHRQ's QualityTools Web site at <http://www.qualitytools.ahrq.gov>.

Update on Ambulatory CAHPS

Ambulatory CAHPS is an initiative to develop a suite of survey instruments for health plans, medical groups and clinicians. The initiative will result in two products:

- CAHPS Clinician & Group Survey
- CAHPS Health Plan Survey

Each survey will consist of a core questionnaire and sets of optional supplemental items.

- **CAHPS Clinician & Group Survey**

This survey is designed for assessing the performance of medical groups and clinicians for the purposes of quality improvement, accreditation, pay-for-performance and maintenance of certification. The CAHPS Consortium has produced a version of the instrument for cognitive testing. Field testing with the beta version will take place later in 2005. A final instrument is expected to be available no later than March 2006.

- **CAHPS Health Plan Survey**

For the Health Plan Survey, the CAHPS Consortium aimed to refresh the existing survey by focusing on items that are directly under the health plan's control. This resulted in a shorter core survey, wording changes and definition changes. During the survey development process, the CAHPS Consortium worked with NCQA to create a specific survey for NCQA Accreditation purposes. This instrument will consist of the core survey plus an NCQA supplemental set of items. The Health Plan Survey is scheduled for testing during 2005 and broad implementation in 2006.

NCBD Research Brief Series

NCBD will launch a series of research briefs in 2005 to highlight research conducted using CAHPS data. We plan to produce the briefs periodically on topics of current interest. Our first brief will address racial and ethnic differences and we anticipate a Spring 2005 release of the publication. Like most NCBD releases, the brief will be available in PDF format online for downloading and in print upon request.

NCBD Web Site

Please visit us at <http://ncbd.cahps.org> to learn about updates and new releases.